

**North Atlantic Right Whale Recovery Plan
Southeast U.S. Implementation Team Meeting, May 16 and 17, 2013
Guana Tolomato Matanzas National Estuarine Research Reserve**

KEY OUTCOMES MEMORANDUM

I. Overview

The North Atlantic Right Whale Recovery Plan Southeast U.S. Implementation Team (SEIT) conducted a two-day meeting on May 16 and 17 at the Guana Tolomato Matanzas National Estuarine Research Reserve in Northeast Florida. The SEIT's Forum on May 16th was open to the public and the SEIT deliberated on the 17th. The Forum agenda was planned with input from the SEIT in order to facilitate priority information updates and discussion with participants and SEIT members. Agendas from both days are attached. The May 17th SEIT deliberations focused on the following primary objectives:

- SEIT business
- Forum Review
- Aerial Survey Revision
- Mid-Atlantic recovery concerns
- Emerging Issues

This Key Outcomes memorandum summarizes the primary results of the SEIT deliberations on May 17th. In general, the synthesis integrates the main themes discussed at the meeting and are presented in five main sections: Overview, Participants, Meeting Materials, Key Outcomes, and Next Steps. The Key Outcomes section is further segmented into the following six sections:

- Welcome and Meeting Kick Off. This section provides a brief overview of meeting, purpose, and agenda overview.
- SEIT business.
- Focused SEIT discussions.
- Consensus Actions. This section summarizes consensus actions to be taken by the Team.
- Consensus Recommendations. This section summarizes consensus recommendations of the SEIT.
- Other. This section summarizes other topics discussed during the meeting.

II. Participants

The SEIT meeting was attended by 12 Team members and included: Nancy Allen, Lance Garrison, Clay George, Mike Getchell, Bill Kavanaugh, Amy Knowlton, Bill McLellan, Katie Moore, Becky Shortland, Leslie Ward-Geiger, Tom Wright, and Sharon Young. Barb Zoodsma, Zach Cress, and Jim McLaughlin represented NOAA Fisheries.

III. Meeting Materials

The Final meeting agenda was distributed via email prior to the meeting. A draft revised Terms of Reference was also distributed and discussed via email prior to the meeting.

IV. Key Outcomes

Below is a summary of the main topics and items discussed during the meeting. This summary is not intended to be a meeting transcript. Rather, it provides an overview of the main topics covered, the primary points and options raised in the discussions, and areas of full or emerging consensus.

A. Welcome and Meeting Kick Off

The meeting kicked off with a brief review of the meeting purpose and agenda. The agenda was briefly reviewed and adjusted to accommodate member travel schedules and the public comment period.

B. SEIT Business

Public Comment Period. The SEIT discussed how to best utilize and prepare for a public comment period scheduled for 3:00pm. The consensus ordered approach was to:

1. Solicit topics from the public
2. Announce a bulleted list of SEIT recommendations
3. Accept public comments. Team members also discussed the amount of time that should be allotted for each public comment. All agreed that individual comments should be limited to 3 minutes (can be extended based on time available) and that written comments would also be accepted.

Public Input Opportunities. The SEIT supported explicitly soliciting public comments, suggestions, and other ideas during the end of the public Forum. Public input could then be considered during SEIT deliberations.

Terms of Reference. Draft revisions to the SEIT's Terms of Reference had been distributed to and discussed by the SEIT via email prior to the SEIT meeting. Many of the revisions were based on SEIT deliberations during the October 2012 meeting. B. Zoodsma asked if SEIT members supported finalizing the draft revisions. However, a debate about whether or not alternates would be allowed evolved into a discussion that required more time than the agenda allowed,

so a final decision on the draft revised TOR was deferred and the conversation would continue via email.

C. Focused Discussions

Forum Review

The Team discussed items of interest that were presented or discussed during the SEIT's public forum:

- a. Field Season:
 - i. Relatively fewer animals were observed in all habitats, including the Southeast U.S. calving area. The SEIT should bring this to the attention of NMFS SERO. Understanding right whale distribution more broadly was suggested.
 - ii. **Recommendation:** A comprehensive annual Southeast U.S. aerial survey report should be generated and provided to SEIT for October (includes summary and trends). In absence of an annual synoptic report, an annual survey season powerpoint presentation should be distributed to SEIT members during the meeting and following the presentation. It was also suggested that there be programmatic capacity for updating population modeling work.
- b. Acoustic Topics
 - i. SEFSC is investigating ambient ship sounds and right whale vocalizations. Methodology includes matching Automated Information System (AIS)-generated ship traffic data to acoustic information collected by SEFSC-deployed marine autonomous recording units (MARU).
 - ii. All of the present passive acoustic studies (excluding MARUs) have been lacking nighttime effort. SEFSC now has a two year study on this topic.
 - iii. The SEIT briefly discussed some objectives/goals of passive acoustic monitoring efforts (PAM):
 1. Understanding acoustic behavior, sound propagation, monitor baseline acoustic environment, and emerging human impacts on acoustic habitat. This will help inform distribution and habitat use in areas that are less understood.
 2. Passive acoustic studies have demonstrated that whales can be present in an area when they are not visually detected. That is, PAM can inform us of the presence of whales even if visually detection is low for various reasons.
 3. Educate the public—for example, the buoys along the main shipping lanes into Massachusetts Bay and Boston Harbor have demonstrated that whales are present much more frequently than initially realized.
 - iv. **Recommendations:**
 1. NMFS should inventory when and where MARUs were deployed along the U.S. Atlantic Coast and report on the results.

- 2. SEFSC should report on their Southeast U.S. PAM results in a timely fashion. Lance will put together a timeline of when data can be worked up from previous SEFSC PAM efforts.
- v. The Navy is interested in classifying acoustic monitoring data for national security reasons (e.g. someone may be covertly tracking submarines). NOAA and Navy are in discussions on how to balance national security needs with biological monitoring needs. An MOU is the likely outcome of these discussions.
- c. In the past, individuals have requested time on the SEIT agenda to present non-SEIT-related and/or miscellaneous information. It may appear that the SEIT invited or supports the various presentations. The SEIT is interested in managing for this misperception and one option is that these types of presentations be vetted by the SEIT prior to presentation during an SEIT meeting. A process for requested presentations needs to be discussed.
- d. BOEM/Wind Related:
 - i. **Recommendation:** NMFS should investigate and determine the acoustic impacts from operational wind fields. Wind fields may displace whales. Marine mammal species found in the western North Atlantic are not found in the North Seas where wind farms are presently operating.
 - ii. **Recommendation:** that NMFS look into Pacific Northwest National Laboratory (PNNL) right whale early warning detection system and other BOEM mitigation measures to collaborate/coordinate efforts (make sure they aren't reinventing the wheel). Such collaboration may prevent redundant efforts being funded by gov. resources.
 - iii. Barb will investigate how NMFS and BOEM are coordinating/reviewing/mitigating offshore energy development projects.
- e. **Recommendation:** NMFS should ensure consistent enforcement of the ship speed rule along the East Coast.
- f. The SEIT noted that there were numerous inaccuracies, inconsistencies, and unsupported statements made during the presentation on the Charleston Bar Pilot Association's (CBPA) Project. A copy of the presentation will be requested from the CBPA so interested members can prepare their voluntary feedback. However, the SEIT will not be tasked as an entity to provide feedback on the presentation.

Aerial Surveys

B.Zoodma reported that the mandatory Early Warning System (EWS) MOA survey lines funded by the Navy, Coast Guard, and ACOE will consist of a subset of the revised Southeast U.S. survey lines. This information was presented during the public forum during the previous day. Three aerial survey teams will be used. This year will be viewed as a trial year for implementing a more adaptive approach to aerial surveys. Barb anticipated receiving regular updates (real time models) of the predicted distribution of right whales based on water temperature. The FWRI will generate the models.

Recommendation: Use the 2013/2014 calving season to test adaptive approach to predicted spatial distribution and starting and stopping rules. Fly the proposed lines, with additional effort north and south as needed and as possible. A technical meeting was noted by SEFSC in order to work out critical details of the 2013/2014 survey plan.

Other ideas that were discussed included the development of “whale outlooks” (similar to pollen, UV, smog, etc. alerts). One member noted that box 3 (per L. Garrison’s Forum presentation) could be considered in order to reduce overall effort and cost.

Recommendation: Beginning in 2014/2015:

- a) Use two survey teams to fly the proposed lines (including EWS MOA lines) in support of an effort reduction and to help address NMFS budget concerns. However, it is anticipated that technical experts/experienced survey staff will meet to determine the detailed optimal survey protocols (including addressing survey effort) that will be needed to address priority survey goals/objectives including timely information on population status.
- b) Consider contingency plans for if whale aggregations are spotted outside of proposed survey area. For example, should an aerial survey team be dispatched to investigate?

MidAtlantic (NC, VA-NY)

For this discussion, the mid-Atlantic (MAUS) is the region from North Carolina to just north of Chesapeake Bay near New York (port of Philly and NY). The SEIT reviewed the draft MAUS framework and members concurred that the immediate first step for the MAUS should be to characterize right whale distribution and habitat use patterns. The SEIT discussed potential organizational approaches to accomplish MAUS objectives (pending review by NOAA) such as a working group(s) or involving state partners etc.

Lance offered that the SEFSC was considering deploying additional PAM but that this was not set in stone. Through an iterative discussion, the SEIT recommended that all right whale information for the mid-Atlantic region be consolidated.

Recommendation: That the SEFSC contract with a qualified scientist to inventory/consolidate all right whale information for the mid-Atlantic region. A SEIT MAUS subteam will meet in early June to prepare recommendations regarding this contract work plan.

The individual could be a postdoc or a contractor. It might be possible to secure funding from BOEM and/or others. The purpose of consolidating the MAUS information is to inform a strategy for addressing prioritized right whale recovery tasks in the MAUS. Priority recovery tasks for MAUS include: a) Characterize and monitor habitat, b) Reduce or eliminate vessel collisions with right whales, c) Monitor trends in human-related injuries and deaths, and d) Protect important habitat.

D. Consensus Actions

1. Lance will put together a timeline for working up data from previous SEFSC PAM efforts.
2. The SEFSC will investigate/pursue a postdoc or contractor to inventory and consolidate MAUS right whale information (see MAUS framework under habitat use section).
3. A subteam will prepare recommendations regarding the contracted analyses/product and timeframe.
4. Those Team members that are interested will review the SCPA presentation and provide feedback to the authors outside of the SEIT process.

E. Consensus Recommendations

1. Generate a comprehensive annual Southeast aerial survey report that can be provided to SEIT for October (include summary and trends).
2. NMFS should inventory when and where MARUs were deployed along the U.S. Atlantic Coast and report on the results.
3. SEFSC should report on their Southeast U.S. PAM results in a timely fashion.
4. NMFS should investigate and determine the acoustic impacts from operational wind farms.
5. NMFS should look into PNNL right whale early warning detection system and other BOEM mitigation measures to collaborate/coordinate efforts between the agencies (make sure no one is re-inventing the wheel).
6. NMFS should ensure consistent enforcement of the ship speed rule along the U.S. East Coast.
7. Beginning in 2014/2015, use two survey teams to fly the proposed survey lines (including EWS MOA lines) in order to reduce overall effort. Consider contingency plans for potential whale aggregations spotted outside of proposed survey area. Additional technical meeting is needed to examine protocols to assure the likelihood that priority objectives will be met.
8. SERO/SEFSC direct fy13 resources to inventory/consolidate MAUS right whale information.

F. Other and Public Comment

- **Next meeting dates** will be October 10-11, 2013. Meeting location options include Savannah, Charleston, Jekyll, Jacksonville Zoo, and Guana Tolomato Matanzas National Estuarine Research Reserve.
- **Public Comment.** Two individuals made public comments.
 - Jim Hain, Woods Hole Associated Scientists and *Right Whale News* Editor, shared recommendations (verbally and in writing) for SEIT operations including encouraging the SEIT to allow observers during deliberations to the greatest extent possible, developing work groups, etc. and revisiting dated research and findings, including aerial surveys. He suggested a science-focused fall venue.
 - John Cameron, South Carolina Pilots Association:
 - Inquired as to why there were more than the 12-member SEIT present. IT was pointed out that NMFS personnel were also present.
 - Was under the impression that the SEIT did not support aerial surveys off South Carolina. Many members of the SEIT responded and corrected this misunderstanding by noting: 1) The SEIT suggested that aerial surveys focus on demography given ship speed rule addresses risk of ship collisions, 2) SC is an important area for right whales, and 3) in addition to real time sight surveillance, survey data is being analyzed to investigate the feasibility of recommended lanes out of Charleston.
 - Was under the impression that the SEIT supported the SCPA presentation during the previous day's public forum. Many members of the SEIT corrected this misunderstanding and pointed out they were being courteous/tactful in providing comments to a student. The SEIT's assessment is documented in paragraph "f" under "Forum Review" section.

Attachment Below: May 16-17 Agenda



NORTH ATLANTIC RIGHT WHALE SOUTHEAST IMPLEMENTATION TEAM MEETING MAY 16-17, 2013
Guana Tolomato Matanzas National Estuarine Research Reserve (GTM NERR)

AGENDA DAY 1 - FORUM

Meeting Goal: Review the status of ongoing SE recovery activities

Meeting Objectives:

1. Review monitoring activities within context of 2012-2013 calving season
2. Review recovery activities implemented since last meeting
3. Obtain updates from recovery partners
4. Develop and provide input for SEIT consideration

Time	Topic	Speaker
09:00-09:20	Welcome and Introductions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review purpose and objectives of meeting Housekeeping Review Agenda Round-robin Introductions 	T. Pitchford
9:20-10:20	Field Season Efforts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2012-2013 Survey Results Mortalities Discussion 	K. Jackson W. McLellan All
10:20-10:30	BREAK – 10 minutes	
10:30-11:15	Field Season Efforts continued <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acoustic Monitoring Efforts Discussion 	Project Leads All
11:15-12:00	Aerial Survey Redesign <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analysis EWS Survey Implementation Discussion 	L. Garrison B. Zoodmsa All
12:00-1:00	LUNCH – 1 hour	
1:00	Agency Updates <ul style="list-style-type: none"> BOEM SERO 	D. Reeb, B. Hooker B. Zoodmsa
2:15-2:25	BREAK – 10 minutes	
2:25-3:30	Agency Updates <ul style="list-style-type: none"> SERO Shipping Liaison USACE USCG Navy Discussion 	J. McLaughlin W. Dauberman-Zerby E. Benard N. Allen All
3:30-4:10	Data Analysis Updates <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fates of Entangled Whales Project by Charleston Bar Pilot Association Discussion 	A. Knowlton, C. George J. Cameron All
4:10-4:40	SEIT <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Updates Discussion 	L. Ward All
4:40-4:45	Closing Remarks and Adjourn	T. Pitchford

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AGENDA DAY 2 – DELIBERATIVE SESSION
08:30-3:00 SEIT ONLY and 3:00-3:45 OPEN TO ALL

Time	Topic
08:30-09:30	Next Meeting Date, TOR, Forum review
09:30-09:40	BREAK – 10 minutes
09:40-11:30	Aerial Survey: Revised methods based on feedback <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How EWS will be blended in • What will one survey day look like? • Predictive modeling to identify tracklines to target • How all of this fits in Sequestration, Continuing Resolution, and their impacts on acquisition.
11:30-12:00	BREAK and Working Lunch – 1 hour
12:00-1:45	Mid-Atlantic U.S. – continued discussion— <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft framework overview (Bill) • Build on previous meeting (we identified/prioritized objectives) • Identify constraints, information gaps, needed actions related to key objectives • Next Steps
1:45-2:00	BREAK – 10 minutes
2:00-3:00	Emerging Issues –define conservation concerns and potential actions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offshore Energy • Right whale monitoring needs: Black seabass fishery case history • "We Can't Wait" East Coast Port Initiative
3:00-3:30	Recap priority issues or recommendations <i>Open to public</i>
3:30- 3:40	Public Comments
3:40-3:45	Wrap up

